

DARIN R. BATTEN

■ 2520 Miracle Lane
■ Mishawka, Indiana 46545-3008
■ darin@allstarcomics.com

December 2, 2004

RECEIVED

DEC 6 - 2004

INDIANA UTILITY REGULATORY COMMISSION
GENERAL COUNSEL

Office of the General Counsel
Indiana Regulatory Commission
302 West Washington Street Room E306
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Sirs,

I would like to address the Commission and inform them of my concerns as a citizen of the State of Indiana. The current rules that are in place concerning utility deposits are unfairly targeting low income individuals and families. The State, and as an extension of that, the Commission, have an obligation and duty to the citizens of Indiana to address these issues as they are of tantamount to the well-being of our population.

It is therefore my opinion and hope that the Commission will address these issues, reducing the deposits that consumers pay and protecting the needs of low income families during the cold winter months. While I am empathic with the desires and needs of the utility companies to derive a profit from their products and services, there is a greater argument to be made for the health and welfare for low income families.

Sincerely,



Darin R. Batten

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DEC 7 - 2004

INDIANA UTILITY REGULATORY COMMISSION
GENERAL COUNSEL

Regarding Gas Bill

December 3, 04

Dear Sirs;

I am writing in regards to the gas proposal for each of us to help pay other's gas bills.

I am a widow and I have had 3 Cancer surgeries in the last 5 years. I am still under doctor's care and I do not feel it's my duty to pay for other people's bills.

I also have a handi-cap son at home in which I try to take care of as well as my self.

I feel that the Gas Co. has set a to high of a price on Reconnection of gas services that have been turned off and people are not able to pay such bills. I also think that the Gas Co should make a way for their customers to have efficient heat. Let the Gas Co. lower their bill of reconnecting or something.

No, I am not for paying other people bills. Don't add any extra to my ~~mine~~ account.

Wilma Creech - 809-893-008-3
1-574-232-7301

Thank You.

Wilma Creech
837 So. 26th St.
South Bend, Ind.

46615

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DEC 7 - 2004

INDIANA UTILITY REGULATORY COMMISSION
GENERAL COUNSEL

12-3-04

Indiana Utilities,

I am writing in regards to our
Nipso Gas bill, & the meeting that took
place at the Century Center on 12-1-04.
in So. Bend, Ind 46695.

Where the Gas Comp wanted to add
Money to the Custerman gas bill:

I & my husband think it unjust, as
each House Hole Customer had a
struggle meeting the large Utilities bill
as it is.

I've had 4 heart attack since 2000 yr
had two this yr, plus bypass surgery.
I am on 24 hr oxygen and my husband
is on a lot off medication, that
we can't afford to buy.

Our Dr, help supply some of
our medication, & I've have a bad
lung disease,

We are getting out all that
we have.

We have been with Nipso 50 yr
& we have done a pretty good chance
doing our bill. But we have a

mead

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DEC 3 - 2004

INDIANA CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
GENERAL COUNSEL

(2)

struggle some times to meet our bill?

I just payed \$117.50 gas bill
We do have other responsible to
meet:

I feel like the Gas Comp
should set a ~~target~~ budget for
the family that it hard for them
& Niposo cut down on the
reconnection fee. and give them a
chance. Instead of making it hard on
all the other senior citizen.

Thank you
Mr & Mrs George Scarborough
1306 Chimney Rd
So. Bend Ind 46615

Our Account No. 885-810-002-0

PUBLIC COMMENT SHEET

IURC RM 04-02 (LSA #04-144) December 1, 2004

RECEIVED
INDIANA UTILITY
REGULATORY COMMISSION
DEC 01 2004

THE INDIANA REGULATORY COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE
COMMISSION'S RULES CONCERNING CUSTOMER SERVICE RIGHTS AND
RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ELECTRIC, GAS, WATER, SEWER, AND
TELECOMMUNICATION UTILITIES

If you would like to comment for the record in this cause you must complete this form. Oral and written testimony is welcome (both carry equal consideration).

NAME: (Please Print)

Lois T. Clark

ADDRESS:

6417 Cedar Trail, South Bend IN 46614

Please provide the name of any firm or association you are representing:

I am an active member of a number of ^{local} organizations, which several are: League of Women Voters, Center for Peace & NonViolence, Michiana Peace & Justice Coalition, Women's Action for New Directions;

DO YOU WISH TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE COMMISSION?

YES

or

☒ NO

(You may make written comments in addition to oral testimony).

LaSalle Park Housing
Martin Luther King, Jr. Foundation, & others, all of whom are concerned
with issues which impact lower income & poverty stricken families. The
I OFFER THE FOLLOWING WRITTEN TESTIMONY: issues also take their toll on our
Agencies & their staff. ultimately
this includes our entire infrastructure

My 31 years of working in Head Start here in
St. Joseph Co. to effect change in the causal factors
of generational poverty were learning opportunities
re the hidden issues that eventually affect our
total community. Until we work at eliminating those
roots, our efforts will continue to sap the energy we
should be expending to strengthen & build community.

Signature:

Lois T. ClarkDate 12-1-04

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS MAY BE PLACED ON BACK OF THE SHEET.

among our families. Heating, food, and all the necessities to not only survive, but thrive will continue to plague persons who cannot earn enough to cover the ever-rising expense. There are too many being "left behind". Band-aid applications are too expensive and repetitive to be continued. Laws governing how these issues must be dealt with must be updated & relevant to the times. There can be no peace in the community when there are not just regulations by which consumers must abide. When the scales become tipped too far in either direction there are consequences which victimize all at some point. It is time to assess ^{how} ~~what~~ those consequences are hampering the total community. I think looking at the problems which were discussed at this hearing from this perspective will clarify an urgent need to make the stated changes made by our Mayor and other city officials & agency personnel & families your #1 priority - stat.

Thank you for bringing the hearing to South Bend. You have already made the first step to answering the need in this crucial dilemma - a crisis for the affected families without heat and other necessities. Let DOFS take a community working together, for the common good.

Boyd-Sledge, Gina

Rm-04-02

From: KreiderAE@aol.com
Sent: Sunday, December 05, 2004 3:28 PM
To: UCCINFO
Subject: Reconnection charges for NIPSCO

Dear Utility Consumer Counselor,

I have followed the debate concerning the reconnection fees charged to people who have fallen in arrears with their payments to NIPSCO. My sense is that to charge a four month deposit is crushing, way beyond the resources of people who are among our poorer citizens, and thus putting them at a health risk - and placing an unsustainable burden on other agencies such as Church Community Services of Elkhart who are called upon to help desperate people. Could the reconnection deposit not be made lower, say equivalent to one month's anticipated charges? This would seem fair, whereas the current system seems unfair.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Alan Kreider
The Eighth Day
215 W. Dinehart Avenue
Elkhart, IN 46517

Boyd-Sledge, GinaRm-04-02**From:** Elkhartbiker@aol.com**Sent:** Thursday, December 02, 2004 8:14 PM**To:** UCCINFO**Subject:** RE: South Bend Hearing

Dear Sirs:

Charging a deposit equal to 4 months gas bill is NOT unreasonable. NIPSCO, as well as the public, deserves to be protected from society's deadbeats. If you can get hooked up with a deposit equal to only one month's bill, that means you could use three months worth of gas before the utility could shut off the gas. If it happens in the winter, NIPSCO can't shut it off till spring. By that time the recalcitrant consumer could have piled up six months overdue bills. If he moves, the gas company is left holding the bag and will eventually pass it on to the people who religiously pay their bills. Is having gas suddenly an entitlement? The sad thing is many people who claim they can't afford to buy natural gas do seem to find the money for other things--cigarettes, computers, drugs, etc. The point is we all make choices as to what our income is going to buy.

Chuck Bower
24278 Elmhurst Dr.
Elkhart, IN
574-875-8444

12/6/2004

Wheeler, Kristina

From: Johnson, Ja-Deen
Sent: Friday, December 10, 2004 3:12 PM
To: Wheeler, Kristina
Subject: FW: Utility Deposits in Indiana

FYI

-----Original Message-----

From: Carolyn Coleman YMSSP [mailto:carolynscoleman@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Friday, December 10, 2004 1:59 PM
To: adwonar@oucc.state.in.us
Cc: jjohnson@urc.state.in.us
Subject: Utility Deposits in Indiana

We have a serious crisis in our community related to utility deposits. Our low income families simply can not afford to get the gas turned back on when they fall behind on their bills. I just got off the phone with a former client, a single mom with 5 children, asking for help with a \$580 deposit added to her gas bill. Her gas has been off for 2 weeks and the colder weather is on its way. She has been turned down by other agencies who are out of money. She is reluctant to publicize her plight via the media in fear of CPS taking her children from her. I did not have any solid leads to share with her for help. Friends and family are not an option according to her circumstances.

Every winter, small children, including newborns come into the world in this community to live in homes without heat or gas for cooking. Parents attempt to mangage with space/kerosene heaters but risk even further loss due to the grave potential for house fires. No one is willing to say enough is enough; every child is entitled to a warm home.

I am writing to request that you exercise whatever influence you may have in this area on behalf of the most vulnerable members of this community, our children, to reduce these oppressive gas deposits once and for all. We all know our children are our future. They need to know that someone cares about their plight in these unheated homes!!!

Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Coleman
Young Moms' Self-Sufficiency Program Director
Youth Service Bureau of St. Joseph County, Inc.

12/13/2004

Mrs. Rose M. Foster
1415 Southlea Drive
South Bend, Indiana
46628

December 1, 2004

Tony Dzwonar, Director Internal Affairs
Indiana Office of Utility Counselor
100 North Senate Ave., Room N501
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2215

Dear Mr. Dzwonar;

This letter is in support of the proposed changes to the Indiana Utility Regulatory Codes that are being reviewed by the IURC. These changes will impact countless families across the northern part of Indiana by providing a fairer set of regulations, and lowering deposits. It is immoral for people to face choosing to do without food or medicine so they can stay warm. As residents of St. Joseph County, we would rather spend our community's resources on moving families to self-sufficiency than paying these unreasonable deposits.

We thank the Commissioners for the work they are doing to bring about changes in the 30 year-old utility code and feel the proposed regulations overall are much improved. The following though, are our areas of concern.

We are supporting the following changes in the proposed rules:

- ✓ Changing the current language allowing up to 4 months of the yearly bill as a deposit amount to **only one month of the yearly bill.**
- ✓ **Eliminating the credit scoring language** and promote the process of using client's credit history with the utility in paying their utility bills.
- ✓ **Eliminate the deposit language** that allows utility companies the ability to charge a deposit after disconnect notices are received in either two consecutive months, or three total are received in 11 months.
- ✓ **Amend the language** to allow community assistance agencies to be refunded the deposit dollars they paid without the agencies also taking responsibility for future bills.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice our support and concerns.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Rose M. Foster

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DEC 06 2004

INDIANA OFFICE OF UTILITY
CONSUMER COUNSELOR

PUBLIC COMMENT SHEET

IURC RM 04-02 (LSA #04-144) December 1, 2004

THE INDIANA REGULATORY COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE COMMISSION'S RULES CONCERNING CUSTOMER SERVICE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ELECTRIC, GAS, WATER, SEWER, AND TELECOMMUNICATION UTILITIES

If you would like to comment for the record in this cause you must complete this form. Oral and written testimony is welcome (both carry equal consideration).

NAME: (Please Print) ROSE M. FOSTER

ADDRESS: 1415 SOUTHLEA DRIVE SOUTH BEND, IN 46618

Please provide the name of any firm or association you are representing:

DO YOU WISH TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE COMMISSION? YES

or **NO**

(You may make written comments in addition to oral testimony).

I OFFER THE FOLLOWING WRITTEN TESTIMONY:

If a charitable organization pays the deposit and then later the person in the home dies or moves away, who does the deposit go back to and is there interest on it for the time the utility Co. held it?

Signature: _____

Date _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS MAY BE PLACED ON BACK OF THE SHEET.

Boyd-Sledge, Gina

From: Fred Birondo-Goddard [fgoddard@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Tuesday, December 07, 2004 8:25 AM
To: UCCINFO
Subject: IURC Cause No. RM 04-02 Comments

Customer Service Rights and Responsibilities Rulemaking
IURC Cause No. RM 04-02

Dear Sirs/Madams,

First of all, I would like to say thank you for making the effort to modify its current administrative rules on customer service rights and responsibilities. I think this is a very important issue for individuals and communities.

These past few weeks, the South Bend Tribune has been carrying the heart wrenching stories of so many people who struggle or are unable to pay their gas bill. Heating one's home is not a privilege, it is a human right.

Specifically, :

There should definitely be a move toward a cap of two months (one sixth) of a consumer's estimated annual bill for deposits. Ideally it should be one month, as it is with most business transactions, but at least this is a start.

I appreciate many of the other proposals, though I recognize that there are some questions around Credit Scoring, especially with respect to low income families. I urge you to investigate the issue of Credit Scoring and consider alternative methods.

Thank you for your attention and your work on this matter.

Sincerely,

Fred Goddard
1020 Stanfield
South Bend, IN 46617-1259

574-232-5484

Boyd-Sledge, Gina

Rm-04-02

From: The Rev. Dr. John B. Hart [jbhelk1@msn.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 02, 2004 1:07 PM
To: UCCINFO
Subject: website comments

Concerning proposed changes to utility regulations:

Have served as pastor in Indiana churches since 1977 and was constantly dealing with families whose heat was disconnected. Twomonths deposit is an impossiblity for many single parent or unemployedfamilies.

Saw young children die in Elkhart during the mid 1990's as result of a natural gas disconnect.

What "serious" alternatives are there for the "poor" who have "badscores" or can't accumulate the natural gas or electrical deposits? For whom is the Indiana Office advocating?

name: The Rev. Dr. John B. Hart
email: jbhelk1@msn.com
phone: 574-848-1882
:

December 1, 2004

Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ



Provincialate
Donaldson, IN 46513

Tony Dzwonar, Director Internal Affairs
Indiana Office of Utility Counselor
100 North Senate Ave., Room N501

Dear Mr. Dzwonar:

This letter is in support of the proposed changes to the Indiana Utility Regulatory Codes that are being reviewed by the IURC. These changes will impact countless families across the northern part of Indiana by providing a fairer set of regulations, and lowering deposits. It is immoral for people to face choosing to do without food or medicine so they can stay warm. As residents of Marshall County, we would rather spend our community's resources on moving families to self-sufficiency than paying these unreasonable deposits.

We thank the Commissioners for the work they are doing to bring about changes in the 30-year-old utility code and feel the proposed regulations overall are much improved. The following though, are our areas of concern.

We are supporting the following changes in the proposed rules:

- Changing the current language allowing up to 4 months of the yearly bill as a deposit amount to only one month of the yearly bill.
- Eliminating the credit scoring language and promote the process of using client's credit history with the utility in paying their utility bills.
- Eliminate the deposit language that allows utility companies the ability to change a deposit after disconnect notices are received in either two consecutive months, or three total are received in 11 months.
- Amend the language to allow community assistance agencies to be refunded the deposit dollars they paid without the agencies also taking responsibility for future bills.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice our support and concerns.

Sincerely,

Sr. Jolita Hulsman, O.N.G.C.

I work with many people that need utility assistance & this indeed is a hardship for them.

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DEC 09 2004

INDIANA OFFICE OF UTILITY
CONSUMER COUNSELOR

Jacob Johnson

802 Sorin St.

South Bend IN 46617

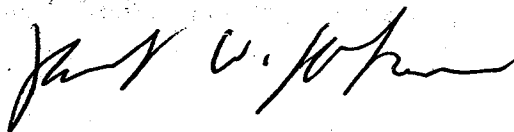
November 1, 2004

Tony Dzwonar, Director of Internal Affairs
Indiana Office of Utility Counselor
100 North Senate Ave., Room N501
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2215

Dear Mr. Dzwonar;

I am writing you in support of the proposed changes to the Indiana Utility Regulatory Codes that are being reviewed by the IURC. These changes will impact countless families across the northern part of Indiana by providing a fairer set of regulations, and lowering deposits. It is immoral for people to face choosing to do without food or medicine so they can stay warm. As a resident of St. Joseph County, I would rather spend our community's resources on moving families to self-sufficiency than paying these unreasonable deposits.

Sincerely,



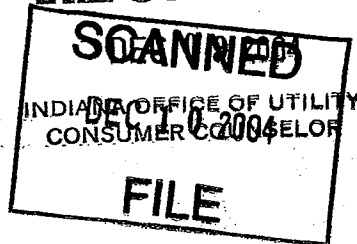
Jacob Johnson

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INDIANA OFFICE OF UTILITY
CONSUMER COUNSELOR

PM 42726
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PM 04-08

Mrs. Margaret Mitchelen
123 Simpson Ave.
Elkhart, Indiana 46516
December 6, 2004

Office of Utility Counselor
100 N. Senate Ave.
Indianapolis, Indiana

Dear Sir:

In regards to the outrageous deposit the N.E.P.S.C. Gas Co. in northern Indiana charges for a connect fee is in need of a more reasonable charge.

But I don't see the just cause to put the losses of the high dollar fees be put upon the accounts of the customers that pay all year, always on time and in good standing as a gas consumer! I'm not able to pay my bills and theirs too! I'm 67 and retired, disabled and a home owner with tapes, health ins, car ins, home ins and it goes on and on!

The reason for the rest of these people who don't and can't afford gas heat is because they have it shut off for the warmer seasons and not pay a ~~time~~ dime on the balance, But the best of the gas users pay all year and not gamble, Smoke or drink up the money.
Please don't penalize the retired communities!

(2)

I'm also a Widow and live within My
budget. I feel the state is getting too
expensive to live in any financial security.
Home owners for the middle class is on
the way Out! Especially for the Widows! and
then we'll all need the help and it
won't be there for us either.

Please have the NIPSCO Co find another
way to be Paid instead of passing it on to
home owners!

Your truly
Margaret Mitchell

Boyd-Sledge, Gina

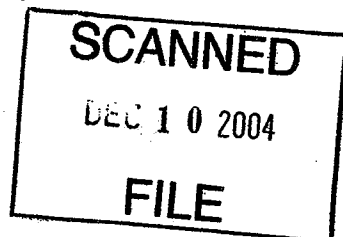
Km-04-02

From: Ladylin1021@aol.com
Sent: Thursday, December 02, 2004 11:55 PM
To: UCCINFO
Subject: re: nipsco

I agree with you and am glad to have you represent the families that have difficulty with these utility companies. It isn't right that families that are already struggling financially have to come up with such exorbitant money to have the heat turned back on. Most of these have young children who get sick from being chilled when their heat is turned off. Also, there is the risk of pipes freezing up and breaking, causing the families more distress. I realize the utility companies are for-profit companies, but 1 month's heat bill should be sufficient for a deposit. Heat is a necessity, unlike cable or phone. Also, many people cook with gas. I hope you are successful in helping people out. If I move to an apartment, I will have to come up with a large deposit probably, even though I have always paid my gas bill, even my final when I moved and didn't have nipsco service any more. Maybe your commitment to helping the average citizen will help me when this time comes. Thank you for caring about us.

12/6/2004

Ruof or



December 7, 2004

1737 Belmont Ave.
South Bend IN 46615-1305

Mr. Tony Dzwonar, Director, Internal Affairs
Indiana Office of Utility Counselor
100 North Senate Ave., Room N501
Indianapolis IN 46204 - 2215

Dear Mr. Dzonar:

We attended the IURC hearing in South Bend last week. We appreciate the opportunity to support some badly needed changes in utility, especially natural gas, regulations that particularly affect the poor.

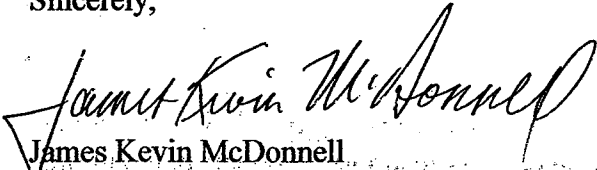
There are many other issues in utility regulation that consumers should be able to address, for example, the way customer choice programs are administered by utility companies. We have found it very difficult to get timely and accurate price information. We urge you to schedule regular, at least annual, open meetings around the state at which consumers could raise important issues.

With regard to the proposed changes to the Utility Regulatory Codes, we support the changes with the modifications widely advocated at the South Bend hearing: deposit amount of 1/12 of the estimated yearly bill, use of credit history rather than credit score, deposit refund to community agencies that have advanced a deposit, and changes in the proposed rules for deposit after disconnect.

We believe that state government in Indiana has an important responsibility to help consumers express a collective voice to publicly regulated utilities. Individual complaints are too easily dismissed by large corporations. The concerns of the poor are especially easy to put aside. We urge that you schedule regular regional meetings so that citizens may voice our concerns.

Thank you.

Sincerely,


James Kevin McDonnell



Carol S. McDonnell
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DEC 09 2004

INDIANA OFFICE OF UTILITY
CONSUMER COUNSELOR

Boyd-Sledge, Gina

From: D. Nelson [dnelson@csinet.net]
Sent: Friday, December 03, 2004 9:16 AM
To: UCCINFO
Subject: IURC Rulemaking No. 04-02

Consumer Services Staff
Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor
100 N. Senate Ave., Rm. N501
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2215

Re: IURC Rulemaking N. 04-02

I'm writing regarding the proposed ruling to cut the deposit required by utility companies for reconnection of services. I am sympathetic to the needs of the elderly and families which have fallen on hard times, but I am not convinced that limiting reconnection deposits will do anything to remedy the problem.

While it may be necessary to regulate utility companies, they are still businesses. They are businesses which have become easy targets for anyone and everyone looking to place blame for their own circumstances. They are businesses with shareholders and customers which are affected by those who cannot or will not pay for services. Why should a company be deprived of the right to expect prepayment of services from a customer who has already been proven to be a bad credit risk? The amount required for this deposit is likely not even enough to cover the bill for subsequent defaulted payments.

Services such as telephone, trash removal, cable television, internet access and insurance coverage are payable in advance. Landlords require first and last month rent and a security deposit. Groceries, clothing, cars and household items are paid for before we take possession of the items. Why should utility companies not be allowed protection from customers who have already been proven to be bad risks?

I am in favor of providing assistance to those who are deserving. However, it is likely that those who fall into this truly deserving category are a minority of those who have lost service due to non-payment. An arbitrary reduction of the reconnection deposit will do little more than further enable those irresponsible customers whose priorities are not properly aligned. The bad debt is ultimately going to be passed on to those of us who have worked very hard for many, many years to pay our own bills.

Social service agencies have been established to assist those who qualify. The proposed new ruling would arbitrarily provide benefits not only for those who really need it, but also to the deadbeats who take advantage of every available opportunity to avoid accepting responsibility for their choices and lifestyles.

When making decisions on this ruling, I urge you to consider that it is likely the vast majority of those who might be benefited by the reduction will be those who "use" the system at every opportunity, and not those who are truly deserving.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Respectfully,
Donna M. Nelson
0516 E. Kenneth Avenue
LaPorte, IN 46350
(219) 393-3731

Subject: Reconnect Fees 42722
RM04-02

SCANNED
DEC 10 2004

The reconnect fee should be lowered.

I am against adding additional cost to other customers to pay for it.

The senior population cannot afford the soaring gas prices and "so called delivery charges" now and to add extra cost will endanger many senior customers.

Maybe the CEO and top execs
could take a pay cut!!

Nancy Nesbitt
Elk County, In.

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DEC 08 2004

INDIANA OFFICE OF UTILITY
CONSUMER COUNSELOR

42722

EN-0402
Page 1 of 1

SCANNED

Subj: Proposed Rules Adding Surcharge To Gas Bills
Date: 12/06/04 11:00:13 AM US Eastern Standard Time
From: Jaynov4
To: FILE accinfo@oucc/IN.gov.

It is my understanding the commission will soon vote to allow a surcharge to all gas bills to cover non-paying customers. This is a terrible idea. First of all it is pure socialism to ask consumers who struggle to pay their own bill to assist with those not responsible enough to pay theirs. We must insist people take responsibility for their lives. Secondly, the moment it becomes widely known society as a whole will pay if you can not (or will not) you will have massive numbers of people claiming this option. You are encouraging nonpayment pure and simple. Doesn't anyone in Government think anymore? Everybody knows there is an element of cost here which must be covered-lets not encourage it to get worse as the government has done with other such welfare ideas. At a minimum, if such an idea must be approved, make it mandatory and a separate line item so at least it becomes a tax-deductible contribution by the taxpayer. Sincerely, Jay C. Ritchie 19981 Gunder Rd. Bristol, In. 46507

Ritchie
19981 Gunder Rd
Bristol, In 46507

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DEC 08 2004

INDIANA OFFICE OF UTILITY
CONSUMER COUNSELOR

Tony Dzwonar, Director of Internal Affairs
Indiana Office of Utility Counselor
100 North Senate Ave., Room N501
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2215

November 22, 2004

Dear Mr. Dzwonar,

This letter is in support of the proposed changes to the Indiana Utility Regulatory Codes that are being reviewed by the IURC. These changes will impact countless families across the northern part of Indiana by providing a **fairer** set of regulations, and lowering deposits. It is *heart-wrenching to hear people share* they face choosing between food or medicine so they can stay warm.

As residents of Elkhart County, we would rather spend our community's resources on moving families to self-sufficiency than paying **unreasonably large deposits**. Many thousands of charity dollars are now being directed to the large frozen deposit fund; money that could be used to help those in crisis **pay their utility bills**, or could be used in **job training or budgeting classes**.

We do thank the Commissioners for the work they are doing to bring about changes in the 30 year-old utility code. We feel the proposed regulations make alot of needed improvements. We are appreciative and we respect the hard work you have put into reevaluating the many detailed regulations that many thought were unchangeable, foundational structures and proceedings.

During this process while Indiana is evaluating the changes needed in utility regulation in a "once-in-a-generation" opportunity, we feel the following are important **changes needed to improve** the proposed rules *from a very good document to become an even more excellent and more socially conscious document:*

We are supporting the following changes in the proposed rules:

1. Changing the current language allowing up to 4 months of the yearly bill as a deposit amount to **only one month of the yearly bill**.
2. **Eliminating the credit scoring language** and promote the process of using client's payment history with the utility.
3. **Eliminate the deposit language** that allows utility companies the ability to charge a deposit after disconnect notices are received in either two consecutive months, or three total are received in 11 months.
4. **Amend the language** to allow community assistance agencies **to be refunded** the deposit dollars they paid on behalf of needy customers, *without* the agencies also taking responsibility for the clients' future bills.

We do thank the Commissioners for the work they are doing to bring about changes in the 30 year-old utility code. We feel the changes being proposed make important, needed improvements.

We thank you for getting and considering community feedback on these important improvements.

Sincerely,

Eber Rice Mueller Executive Director
The Window Community Volunteer Center
223 South Main St
Goshen, IN 46526

RECEIVED

DEC 08 2004

INDIANA OFFICE OF UTILIT
CONSUMER COUNSELOR

Boyd-Sledge, Gina

From: Dzwonar, Anthony
Sent: Thursday, December 02, 2004 9:50 AM
To: Boyd-Sledge, Gina
Cc: Shike, Brent
Subject: FW: RM 04-02 Meeting at Century Center tonight

Gina: Please start a new folder for rulemaking comments we've received since sending our last batch over to the IURC and add this one (note that the first e-mailer is not the commenter, simply the forwarder). One additional e-mail coming your way.

-----Original Message-----

From: Dawn Chapla [mailto:dchapla@uwsjc.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 02, 2004 9:36 AM
To: Dzwonar, Anthony
Subject: FW: Meeting at Century Center tonight

-----Original Message-----

From: Snyder, Pat [mailto:snyderp@sjrmc.com]
Sent: Wednesday, December 01, 2004 2:16 PM
To: 'lfcoutreach@tin.net'; Dawn Chapla; Washington, Gilbert
Subject: Meeting at Century Center tonight

I am unable to attend the meeting tonight due to the fact that I am barely making it through the day due to muscle spasms in my back. However, I wanted my 'voice' to count and am hopeful you will receive other e-mails on this subject which you can share with this committee re: other voices in our community.

To the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission:

Please consider changing the law that regulates utility deposits in Indiana. Many of the folks in our community cannot come up with the kind of money currently required to re-connect their utilities after a shut-off situation and children and older adults are the ones being jeopardized in the process. Perhaps the stockholders could receive their dividends from some other means available. I urge you to be more compassionate in this process. I also urge you to think compassionately and to consider how YOU might be affected if the shoe was on the other foot. Please think about changing this policy. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Pat Snyder
Staff Assistant, Center for Spiritual Care
Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center
Center for Spiritual Care
801 E. LaSalle Ave.
South Bend, IN 46617

Boyd-Sledge, Gina

From: Dzwonar, Anthony
Sent: Thursday, December 02, 2004 9:51 AM
To: Boyd-Sledge, Gina
Cc: Shike, Brent
Subject: FW: RM 04-02 Letter sent to St. Joseph County Self-Sufficiency Task Force to be forwarded

per my e-mail, for file (to be forwarded to IURC on 12/10).

-----Original Message-----

From: Dawn Chapla [mailto:dchapla@uwsjc.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 02, 2004 9:36 AM
To: Dzwonar, Anthony
Subject: Letter sent to St. Joseph County Self-Sufficiency Task Force to be forwarded

Dear Sir,

I am a former resident of South Bend, Indiana. I lived there all my life until recently moving to Chicagoland. I went home for Thanksgiving break and read the articles in the South Bend Tribune concerning the horrific treatment of the NIPSCO corporation.

I just want you to know how appaled I was to read in the paper of NIPSCO's policies on handling customers who have had their gas shut off. Even in the Chicago area they are not treated like this. I am sure that Chicago faces situations like this also. I do know that they do not have to pay as much to have their gas turned back on as NIPSCO demands. I also know that they turn it back on for a fraction of the cost after November 1st until April.

I think that NIPSCO should have to adopt a different policy for these situations. They need to look at some of the successful states and communities around them.

Actually they probably need to be sued for endangerment of life, if not charged with murder.

I don't know if there is anything I can personally do, but if you think I can be of help please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you.

Shaun Spite RN, MSN
3035 N. Lewis AV
Waukegan, IL 60087
224-628-4138

SCANNED

Boyd-Sledge Gina 2004

From: Beth Suderman [gbsuderman@juno.com]
Sent: Friday, December 10, 2004 10:52 AM
To: UCCINFO
Subject: Proposed New Utility Rules

FILE

IN Office of Utility Consumer Counselor:

I recently attended the hearing of the Utility Regulatory Board in South Bend. I appreciate your conducting such hearings and the opportunity for public input both at the hearings and by written comment.

Personally most of the changes don't affect me personally. We are middle income people who fortunately have enough savings that we don't have to make the difficult choices that many low income folks have to make. We don't have to choose between utility payments, medications, and rent or mortgage. Our credit ratings are good and it has been years since we have had to pay a deposit. In fact we are fortunate to be able to contribute to agencies that assist those who cannot always pay. This year we have given about \$3,000 to Church Community Services in Elkhart. We are well aware that such agencies are very negatively affected by the 4 month deposits currently required by NIPSCO. That is an outrageous and impossible amount for families or individuals struggling financially! I am very willing to help those with limited resources, but I do not appreciate the money I give to help the poor subsidizing the utility companies with a several month deposit. I don't see the utility companies struggling to make ends meet. For me it is unjust to pad the pockets of the rich by causing economic hardship to those who can least afford such deposits. It is not in our nation's best interest to perpetuate and increase the gap between the rich and the poor.

I am glad you are proposing these changes and would encourage you to go even further by requiring only 1 month security deposit. You are in a position to advocate for justice for those least able to do that for themselves. Thank you for the good you will be able to bring to many lives through your proposal. Although I am writing this letter, it reflects the hopes of my wife as well.

With hope and prayers for a more equitable world (and in this case the state of IN),

Greg and Beth Suderman
1805 Frances Ave
Elkhart, IN 46516

Nevertheless I have heartfelt convictions about

Boyd-Sledge, Gina

Rm-04-02

From: Dani [daniela@iquest.net]
Sent: Thursday, December 02, 2004 2:25 PM
To: UCCINFO
Subject: Proposed Changes to Utility Regulations

The proposed changes are not near enough for low-income people. I know, because I live alone and have experienced financial problems on a few occasions myself. I know that for someone who is permanently low-income, there is no way they can pay all their bills on time. Credit worthiness should NEVER be a factor in whether a person has heat or is able to cook, have lights to read or use the telephone to obtain work, for emergencies, etc.

If all of the people at the upper levels in utility companies would switch from being rich to being comfortable, that would be enough money to serve a huge amount of poor people, possibly everyone in need. Also, if we didn't have monopolies on the part of utility companies, they would be forced to have competitive prices which the average or poor person could afford. When I work for \$10/hour with a Bachelor's degree, which is about all I can find where I live, I am unable to make my mortgage and utility payments without even having anything to eat, gas for my car, clothing, medical, etc. What is a person on minimum wage supposed to do? Also, what if that person has children?

I have had zero income for almost three months now. I have physical problems which stop me from being able to accept employment which involves the use of parts of my body. I have searched for work fervently, and have not as yet found any. My credit is horrible, my income having gone from \$34,000 per year to \$16,900 for two years, and now zero. I was able to obtain \$260 in help from CANI, which includes \$210 for gas and \$50 for electric. That is enough to cover one month of heat in winter here. What are we supposed to do for the rest of the winter? I'm sorry, but it is not acceptable for utility companies to force people to live in the cold without water or electric service, especially in times when unemployment is so high.

Donnelle Thompson
2727 Pine Manor Court
Fort Wayne, IN 46809
260-478-1111
daniela@iquest.net

12/6/2004

Boyd-Sledge, Gina

From: Regina Wilson [rwilson@stjoeparish.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 09, 2004 2:03 PM
To: UCCINFO
Subject: IURC Cause No. RM 04-02

Customer Service Rights and Responsibilities Rulemaking
IURC Cause No. RM 04-02

Dear Sirs/Madams,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Social Justice Commission of Saint Joseph Catholic Parish in South Bend, Indiana, with comments for the Customer Service Rights and Responsibilities Rulemaking (IURC Cause No. RM 04-02). Twenty members of our parish were in attendance at the hearing in South Bend on December 1. We have chosen to send in our comments after that hearing.

We are called to respond to this opportunity by our faith and even by our Pope who wrote: "I appeal to all to be convinced of the seriousness of the moment, to fulfill your commitment by the way you live, by the use of your resources, by your civic activity, by contributing to economic and political decisions, and by personal involvement in national and international undertakings (Solicitude Rei Socialis #47)."

In this same document, Pope John Paul II wrote: "Those who are more influential because they have greater share of goods and common services should feel responsible for the weaker and be ready to share with them all they possess...(#39)"

As such we feel it is our responsibility to speak out and the responsibility of the State of Indiana, specifically the IURC, to protect the rights and dignity of the poor.

We view the proposed changes in the Customer Service Rights and Responsibilities Rulemaking as generally positive and would ask that you move forward with their implementation. Concretely, we would like to affirm the following:

1. The new rule that would change the deposit to 2 months of a yearly bill that a utility company can charge, though we would prefer 1 month.
2. The new rule standardizes all utilities in terms of rules.
3. The new proposal is easier to read.
4. It is easier to file complaints.
5. The utility cannot determine your creditworthiness based on someone who lives with you.
6. If your deposit is over \$150, the utility must give you 3 months to pay it in 3 installments, and they must reconnect your service once the first payment is made.

12/10/2004

7. The utility can only go back 45 days in your past history with them to determine if they can give you a disconnect notice.

8. The utility is required to return the deposit to the customer as long as the customer has paid their bill on time for 10-11 months.

9. The utility must start paying interest on your deposit after 30 days.

10. During the moratorium period of December 1 to May 15, the customer can get their service back on by paying 20% of the bill and 20% of the deposit.

Our only concern is with the determination of credit worthiness. As it is now, a customer must prove their credit worthiness based on a credit score determined by the utility. While this is seen as a fair way by some, it is still seen as inaccurate and hurts the customer, especially the working poor and many in the middle class.

Again, we appreciate your sincere work on this and have faith that you will establish these new rules.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Regina Wilson
Pastoral Associate
St. Joseph Parish
South Bend, IN

I OFFER THE FOLLOWING WRITTEN TESTIMONY

My name is Linda Jung-Zimmerman. I live at 3109 Chelsea Court, South Bend, IN. I am the director of Stone Soup Community, a not for profit social service agency here in South Bend. Our agency works collaboratively with the Food Bank of Northern Indiana and other agencies and serves low income families who have additional basic needs besides food. I have been working in social services in this community for the past ten years. Never have I seen so many individuals struggling, groveling, to meet basic human needs.

A few days ago we had a family asking for assistance. Both parents are working. The mom got sick last year and was unable to work for a few months. They got behind on their bills. They made the mistake of deciding to have the heat disconnected for the warmer months, thinking that they did not need it on and that this would allow them time to catch up. The family saved their money all summer and early fall so that they could have the gas turned on before winter and the cold weather. Their bill was \$981. The family thought that paying that amount would enable them to get their heat on again. After they drove to LaPorte to pay the bill so the money would be there, they were told by Nipsco that they needed \$440. more for deposit and reconnect. They are now over income for Energy Assistance since they are both working, but money is still tight. They do not have an additional \$440. to pay up front to Nipsco to get gas turned on. Nipsco was now willing to spread out the deposit payments since they did not qualify for Energy Assistance. This family then came to us, and other agencies, to beg for the deposit money. As you know, helping agencies paying these kinds of deposits is a total drain on the agencies and the community at large. So much of this money could be spent wisely on individuals and programs for the community.

We all should be HORRIFIED and APPAULED, that in our country, our state, our community, low income families must choose between basic life necessities; Will they choose to be warm or will they choose to feed their children?

Such unjust policies from Nipsco are asking families to do the impossible; such unjust policies are asking helping agencies to do the impossible, such unjust policies are asking our communities to do the impossible. What does it really cost to provide these services? Can Nipsco make a bit of a profit and not bankrupt families, agencies and the local communities? I believe the new proposals are a step in the right direction. I think asking for a deposit based on one month of an annual bill would be an even better policy.

We urge you to consider the following:

- Omit credit scoring to protect low income families from unfair and punitive practices.
- Cap the cost of deposits at one month of the yearly bill.
- Have utility companies establish clear, understandable policies and clarify to the public how decisions are made.

- Utility companies should have representatives who are local, who can talk directly with helping agencies about the client's bill. The person communicating with the agencies should have knowledge and authority.

It is cruel, inhumane and unjust to force people to beg for money to have heat in Northern Indiana. Heat in Northern Indiana should not be considered a luxury. It is a necessity; a basic human need! We at Stone Soup Community challenge the IURC to take the high road, to become a model by establishing policies that are just and merciful, so our families and communities can thrive.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Linda Zimmerman